



# A study on Work Family Guilt and Work Family Conflict among Working Women

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## ABSTRACT

Work family guilt is feeling on inadequacy and self-blame that arises when individual perceive that they are not giving enough time and attention to their work and family responsibilities. Work family conflict arises when work responsibilities interfere with family obligation or vice versa creating strain. Frequently, working women struggle to balance their work and family responsibilities, resulting in work-family conflict. Working women often experience work-family guilt, or the sensation of neglecting one domain while focusing on the other. The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between work-family guilt and work-family conflict among working women. A total sample of 40 working women in the age 28-35 was collected. Standardized scales were used to measure Work Family Guilt and Work Family Conflict. The results found out that family-interference with work guilt is significantly positively related to work to family conflict and family interference with work guilt also came to be significantly positively correlated to family to work conflict. Family-friendly policies such as parental leave and affordable childcare can assist in reducing the burden on working women and fostering a healthy work-life balance.

**Keywords:** Work Family Guilt, Work Family Conflict, Working Women.

## Introduction

Women are no longer confined to the home's four boundaries. Over the years, women's labor force participation has increased substantially with more women pursuing higher education and seeking career opportunities. Women are now an integral part of the labor force, making significant contributions to the economy and society. Nevertheless, women continue to encounter unique obstacles in the workplace such as gender discrimination, unequal pay, and work-family conflict. Work family guilt is a familiar feeling experienced by many individuals who struggle to balance their professional and personal lives. Work family

conflict arises when the work responsibilities interfere with family obligations creating stress and tension.

Further, leading to additional negative outcomes such as reduced job satisfaction, family conflict and poor mental health.

Due to traditional gender roles and societal expectations, working women are more likely to face work family conflict. As they struggle to meet the demands of their professional and personal lives, it can also lead to feelings of work-family guilt, making it vital to promote workplace policies and culture that support work-life integration. Moreover, the lack of support from employers, family and society in balancing work and familial obligations can worsen these feelings. Apart from these challenges, women frequently encounter obstacles to career advancement and are underrepresented in positions of leadership.

Despite recent advances in gender equality in the workplace, women continue to encounter systemic barriers to career advancement. Women frequently encounter a "glass ceiling," an invisible barrier that impedes their advancement to greater positions within an organization. This is especially true for women of color, who encounter additional obstacles due to racism and bias in the system.

Even though women have made significant strides in the workplace, they continue to encounter unique obstacles that can hinder their work-life integration and career advancement. It is essential to resolve these obstacles by implementing policies that promote equality, fostering a supportive workplace culture, and recognizing women's contributions in the workplace. By doing so, we can create a workplace that is more inclusive and equitable for everyone.

Due to their dual responsibilities working women endure both physically and mentally (Bhandari, 2004). Researchers also in past literature asserts that even though women achieve higher education and get employed, they are expected to fulfil their duties of traditional tasks of cooking, domestic chores and caring for children (Sen, 1990)

### **Work Family Guilt**

Daly (2001) defined work-family guilt "as the difference between one's preferred and actual level of participation in the domains of home and work". Morgan & King (2012) defined work-family guilt as "an emotion that can occur when one's behaviour violates the norms of how one believes they should balance the demands of work and family responsibilities and adversely affects an individual".

Work family guilt originates from the inability to completely fulfil the social roles of worker and family member (Livingston & Judge, 2008). The authors add that the guilt arises from both work-interfering-with-family (WIF) and family-interfering-with-work (FIW) due to inability for one to wholly fulfil the social roles of worker and family member.

Research studies suggest that mothers of young children are more likely to experience guilt of work on family as compared to fathers (Aarntzen et al., 2021, Borelli et al., 2017)

## **Work Family Conflict**

According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), work family conflict is defined as “special form of inter role conflict that arises when there are incompatible demands between work and family roles”. The authors also add on to it dimensions, Work-to-family conflict, and Family-to-work conflict. Work to family occurs when experiences and commitments at work interfere with personal life and Family to work emerges when family responsibility interferes with work life.

Work Family Conflict is directly associated with stress (Amstad et al., 2011; Sharma et al., 2016). Additionally, there's an inverse relationship between physical health (Frone et al., 1991). Research asserts that individuals with work-family conflict experience more depression (Zhang et al., 2007), increased marital problems (Barling & Macewen, 1992; Higgins et al., 1992), reduced health (Frone et al., 1997), decreased life satisfaction, well-being, and quality of family life (Aryee et al., 1999; Stoeva et al., 2002).

The previous research supports the findings that women experience more inter-role conflict as compared to men (Dex, 1998; Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Greenhaus et al., 1991; Wiersma, 1990).

Role conflict in performing the responsibilities at work and in the family contributed to reduced job and life satisfaction (Sirgy & Lee, 2018).

## **Method**

### **Sample**

A total sample of 40 working women in the age 28-35 was collected from Delhi, NCR.

### **Measures**

**Work Family Conflict:** The work-family conflict scale has been developed by Netemeyer, Boles and McMurrin (1996) to assess whether an individual experiences incompatible demand between work and

family roles. The scale comprises a total number of 10 items ranging on a 7-point Likert scale covering the dimensions from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

**Work Family Guilt:** The work-family scale has been introduced by McElwain (2005) to assess the consequences of work and family conflict, i.e., the discrete emotions, particularly guilt. The items are administered with the help of a 1–6-point Likert scale, dimensioned from “Strongly disagree” for “1” to “Strongly agree” for 6.

## Procedures

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the questionnaires were filled through Google forms. Each participant was thanked for their cooperation. Standardized psychological tests were administered to the participants.

## Analysis of Data

## Results

**Table 1**

*N, Mean, Standard Deviation of Work Family Guilt, Work Family conflict among working women*

	Work to Family	Family to work	Work interference with family guilt	family interference with work guilt
N	40	40	40	40
Mean	3.75	3.78	3.79	3.68
Standard deviation	0.312	0.312	0.274	0.325

**Table 2**

*Correlation of Work Family Guilt, Work Family conflict among working women*

	Work to Family	Family to work	Work interference with family guilt	family interference with work guilt
Work to Family	—			
Family to work	0.222	—		
Work interference with family guilt	0.141	0.224	—	
family interference with work guilt	0.408 **	0.694 ***	0.247	—

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## Discussion of Results

The results found out that family-interference with work guilt is significantly positively related to work to family conflict ( $r=0.408$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Further, family interference with work guilt also came to be significantly positively correlated to family to work conflict ( $r=0.694$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

The results suggests that feeling guilty about family responsibilities interfering with work is positively related to both work and family conflict and family to work conflict. This means that women who feel guilty about not being able to fully attend to their work responsibilities due to family demands and more likely to experience conflict in both directions between work and family. The findings highlight the importance of addressing guilt related to family interference with work in efforts to reduce work-family conflict.

Researchers states that “work-to-family conflict occurs when the pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible, and as a result, participation in the family role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the work role.” (Weer & Greenhaus, 2014). Previous researchers (Dex,1998; Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Greenhaus et al., 1991; Wiersma, 1990) support our findings that women experience more inter-role conflict as compared to men

## Conclusion

The present study investigated the relationship between work-family conflict and work-family guilt among working women. A total sample of 40 working women in the age 28-35 years was collected. The results found out that family-interference with work guilt is significantly positively related to work to family conflict and family interference with work guilt also came to be significantly positively correlated to family to work conflict.

Work family guilt and conflict are typical obstacles for women. These obstacles can be detrimental to their health, life satisfaction and overall performance at work. Work-family guilt and conflict are significant obstacles that many working women must overcome.

In addition, it is essential to cultivate a workplace culture that values and supports work-life balance. This can be accomplished through the provision of paid parental leave, flexible work hours, and remote work options. Employers can also promote a healthy work-life balance by encouraging employees to prioritize self-care and take pauses. Additionally, it is essential to acknowledge the contributions and accomplishments of women in the workplace. This includes promoting women to positions of leadership and ensuring that they are compensated equitably for their work. Additionally, women should have access to networking opportunities and mentorship programmes that can aid in the development of professional relationships and career advancement.

By instituting flexible work arrangements, family friendly policies, training and development, employee assistance programmes and workload management, organisations can help female employees achieve a work-life balance. These measures can ultimately contribute to greater job satisfaction, enhanced work performance and enhanced well-being for working women.

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